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Review of *The Cambridge companion to narrative*

posted October 3rd, 2010

The Cambridge companion to narrative. Ed. by **David Herman**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xiii, 328. ISBN [9780521673662](#). \$34.99.

Reviewed by [Muhammad Aurang Zeb Mughal](#), *Durham University*

This volume is a commentary of key ideas and approaches to narrative study contributed by sixteen scholars in eighteen chapters. The contributions analyze various approaches to narrative inquiry in everyday storytelling and media from literature to television.

The volume is divided into four parts. In the first part, David Herman introduces the objectives and contents of the book. He describes how narratology has been an important concern within language and literature, while the 'narrative turn' in the social sciences and related disciplines like psychology, education, cognitive sciences, theology, and law shows the increasing interest narrative has held as an object of inquiry in recent decades. **Mary-Laure Ryan** then reviews different definitions of narrative in order to establish a definition of narrative suited to the wider use of the concept across disciplines by describing misunderstandings about narrative.

Part 2 discusses narrative inquiry in fiction and literature: story, plot, time and space, character, dialogue, focalization, and genre. The third part of the volume analyzes approaches to narrative inquiry in other media, e.g. the shift of interest of sociolinguists from fiction to conversational storytelling, and scholarly interest in drama, film, television, and digital media. The fourth part discusses perspectives that narrative analysis offers on gender, rhetoric, ethics, ideology, language, cognition, emotion, consciousness, identity, and alterity.

The book analyzes the current treatment of these terms and critiques diverse opinions on the use of these approaches in different contexts. In surveying the development of narrative inquiry from Russian Formalism through French Structuralist Narratology and Anglo-American contributions to the current traditions, this volume demonstrates the continuity between classical approaches and post-classical methodology.

This volume will be very helpful to students just starting narrative study for understanding the basic concepts of narrative analysis. Researchers coming from linguistics, literature, the arts, rhetoric, creative writing, psychology, the social and cognitive sciences, media studies, and similar disciplines will find it a useful summary of the analysis of narrative in different contexts.

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